

## ■ Disruptive Students In-Service

I've never been thrilled with this label for students at Job Corps. Perhaps the "Challenging" Student might be better? We also know that students may be seen as a disruption or a challenge to some staff, while other staff regard the individual someone "you just need to get to know". At any rate, feel free to create your own title for this in-service.

You can start this in-service with a little experiment involving your audience. Bring in a tape player with a music cassette or two. Perhaps you can already have some music playing when the audience files in. After the people have settled, you can leave the music playing and start the in-service by introducing yourself and letting people know about the outline of the in-service. In all likelihood, someone will ask you to turn off the music because they can't hear or it is annoying (if no one speaks up, you can turn the music louder!). When this occurs, ask the person if the music was disrupting the workshop for him (and, turn off the music!!). Then, ask the group if anyone did NOT regard it as disruptive. Ask that individual how he/she was able to tune it out or not react to it. This is a good time to introduce the notion that the "disruptive" student at Job Corps is sometimes 'in the eye of the beholder'.

The handouts on "Classroom Disruption" and/or "Disruptive Behavior in the Dorm" (from *Intervention Strategies*) can be distributed at this time. You can review these in several manners. You can ask staff to identify which of the "Presenting Problems" are the most challenging for them. You can ask staff to identify which problems are the ones for which they would like suggestions from other staff in dealing with students. You can also have each staff identify which of the "Strategies" they tend to do most with students, write these responses on a white board or flip chart, and find out which strategy is the most used at your center. You can also take an informal vote as to which "Strategy" is the one most unrealistic or likely to fail.

Distribute the "Case Study" sheet. Have someone in the group identify a student who is seen as Disruptive. It might be helpful if it's a student well-known to the staff. Have the group answer the questions aloud about the student- KEEP IT RESPECTFUL. An alternative is to have the larger group break into smaller groups, with each group focusing on a different student. Share answers afterward.

Turn the music back on at an annoying volume. Have the staff call out some non-strategic statements to say to a student in response to the situation. The "Top Ten Mistakes to Make with Disruptive Students" may help staff identify and perhaps even laugh at some of the errors they have made in dealing with students. If your audience is humble enough, perhaps some of them will be willing to announce some of the bigger mistakes they have made with students!

# ■ Classroom Disruption

*There are countless Job Corps success stories about students who were one step away from being terminated.*

## Presenting Problems

- Student frequently argues with other students or staff.
- Student expresses anger inappropriately in class.
- Student distracts others in the classroom by talking or failing to comply with rules.
- Student yells, uses profanity, or engages in verbally or physically aggressive behavior in the classroom.
- Student mishandles classroom property.

## Student Goals

- Increased compliance with classroom rules with improved focus on academic and vocational goals.
- Increased ability to manage anger appropriately.
- Increased ability to respect the property of Job Corps and other students.
- Fewer arguments in the classroom.

## Strategies

- Assist the student in identifying situations in the classroom that are anger provoking (see Appendix B: Precipitants; also see Anger, Personality Conflict-Staff, and Personality Conflict-Student).
- Encourage the student to journal about feelings prior to and after being disruptive in class (see Appendix D: Journal).
- Discuss the impact of his behavior. Assist him in developing alternative strategies that are not disruptive (see Appendix H: Anger Management).
- Reinforce the student's efforts to manage his anger appropriately (see Appendix E: Conflict Resolution).
- Confront the student on his behavior when disrespectful of other's feelings or property.

- Encourage the student to discuss his goals while at Job Corps. How might his current behavior interfere with reaching these goals? Discuss with him the importance of behaving appropriately, as well as tolerating the behaviors, opinions and beliefs of others in the workplace.
- Encourage the student to discuss his self-talk, emotional cues, or feelings that exist in accordance with his anger or disruptive behavior. Identify more appropriate self-talk, e.g., "I can take care of this after class".

### **When To Refer**

- Refer to counselor or to Center Mental Health Consultant if staff or other students frequently report that the student is behaving disruptively.
- Refer to security or to Center Standards Incentive Officer if the student poses a threat to others or to himself.
- Refer to counselor if the student fails to respect the property of Job Corps or other students.

## ■ Disruptive Behavior in the Dorm

### **Presenting Problems**

- Student frequently argues with other students or staff.
- Student harasses other students or staff.
- Student damages the property of Job Corps or of other students.
- Student frequently yells, uses profanity, or engages in verbally aggressive behavior.
- Student behaves in a physically aggressive manner.

### **Student Goals**

- Improved ability to refrain from verbally aggressive behaviors (i.e., profanity, yelling, threats, etc).
- Improved ability to refrain from behaviors which others find intimidating, including non-verbal gestures.
- Improved ability to address others in a calm and rational manner.
- Improved coping strategies for dealing with anger and conflict.
- Decreased occurrence of poor coping behaviors associated with anger.
- Decreased occurrence of harassing behaviors.
- Fewer arguments with others.

### **Strategies**

- Assist the student in identifying situations which are anger provoking (see Appendix B: Precipitants).
- Encourage the student to express other feelings which may accompany his anger (see Appendix H: Anger Management).
- Encourage the student to journal when angry, paying attention to the intensity of his feelings, his reaction to the situation, and the effectiveness of his method of coping (see Appendix D: Journal).

- Encourage the student to list current ways of coping with dorm problems, as well as possible alternative strategies. For example, how does he handle roommate conflicts? Noise in the hallways? Rumors?
- Reinforce the student's efforts to control his temper when expressing anger.
- Reinforce the student's efforts to listen to other's feelings despite feeling angry or at odds with others.
- If relevant to the student's disruptive behavior, see Theft, Vandalism, Consistent Rule-Breaking, or Self-Harm.

### **When to Refer**

- Refer to counselor or to the Center Mental Health Consultant (CMHC) if student's roommate(s) or other students report repeated disruptive behavior.
- Refer to the student's counselor or to the CMHC and Center Standards Incentive Officer (CSIO) if the student continues to behave in a disruptive manner despite staff's attempts to intervene.
- Refer to the CSIO and to security if the student exhibits violent or potentially threatening behavior.
- Refer to the CSIO and to security if the student is harassing another student or staff member.
- Refer to the student's counselor and to CSIO if student is suspected of stealing.

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## ■ Disruptive Student Case Study

What is some of the relevant background about the student?

What are the behaviors which are problematic for this student?

What you think the student is trying to do with these behaviors?

How have these behaviors helped the student in the past?

Are you, or others at Job Corps, frightened of the student?

What has been tried thus far to help the student?

What is the message this student needs to keep telling himself in order to change the behaviors and be successful at Job Corps?

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## ■ Top Ten Mistakes to Make with Disruptive Students at Job Corps

Do it Publicly: If you ever need to set limits or confront a student, be sure to do it in public. The more people (especially other students) in the audience when you give personal feedback to someone, the better.

Kick a Person When They Are Already Down: If a student is already having a bad day, this is a golden opportunity to really go after them. They are vulnerable; they are at risk for getting into further trouble. Pick on them and it will look like it is entirely the student's fault.

Give Long Explanations: When you tell disruptive students what they did wrong and what must be corrected, repeat yourself at least three times. You don't want them to simply understand what the problem is; you want to wear them down into submission. One variation is to talk increasingly louder when you offer discipline to a student.

Turn It into a Power Struggle: Job Corps students offer excellent opportunities for you to experiment with feeling in control. Take every opportunity to show the student "who's boss". Keep this motto in mind: Win every fight.

Put Your Pride Before the Student's Dignity: Probably everyone agrees that Job Corps students frequently feel ashamed or threatened when challenged on their behavior. Wimpy Center Mental Health Consultants might tell you that disruptive students should be given a chance to "save face", i.e., that they should be able to be disciplined without injury to their self-esteem. Baloney - how else can you tell if students are listening unless they feel ashamed?

Preach about Job Corps: When a student is disruptive, it is a perfect moment to tell them about how they are not being grateful for all that Job Corps is offering to them. It is a wonderful time, especially if they are very angry and defensive, to remind them that Job Corps is paying for everything and the student isn't taking it seriously. Saying "You are wasting space" works every time (doesn't it?).

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Fight Fire with Fire: If a student is somewhat angry, you should be a little louder than the student. If the student is very angry, you should be at least that angry and more. Rise to the occasion. If the student isn't calm, why should you be?

Don't Show Any Attention: You don't want to reward bad behavior, right? So, when a typically disruptive student has a good day, don't reward the student. After all, if a student was obnoxious earlier, you have the right to not talk to him even when his behavior is appropriate. If he thinks you are mean, that's his problem. Plus, if students think you are mean, they will definitely respect you more.

Analyze The Student Aloud: "You're just doing this because..." "I bet your parents never told you ..." are great comments to help Job Corps students make changes in their behavior. Students will feel so defensive or hurt that they will be unable to tell you to stop. Think about how *you* feel when other people analyze you - doesn't it work every time?

Take it Personally: When a student is disruptive, keep thinking that the student only does it to you. Act like it is a personal attack, i.e., that your self-esteem is at stake if you don't fight back. Get defensive. Feel threatened. Use all of the preceding mistakes necessary to get your point across.